

032c



POST-HEROIC LIFE IN THE LONG SHADOW OF WAR

12TH ISSUE BERLIN WINTER 2006/2007

DE10 EU€12 US\$15 www.032c.com



TERENCE KOH

Photography TERENCE KOH/VALERIE STAHL Text VICTORIA CAMBLIN



Sprungkopf, 2006.



Untitled, 2006.



Sprungkopf (Detail), 2005.



Golden Piss Interior, 2004.



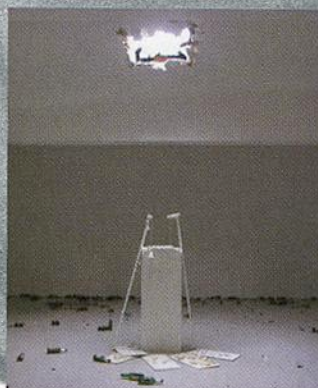
Untitled, 2006.



Big White Cock, 2004.



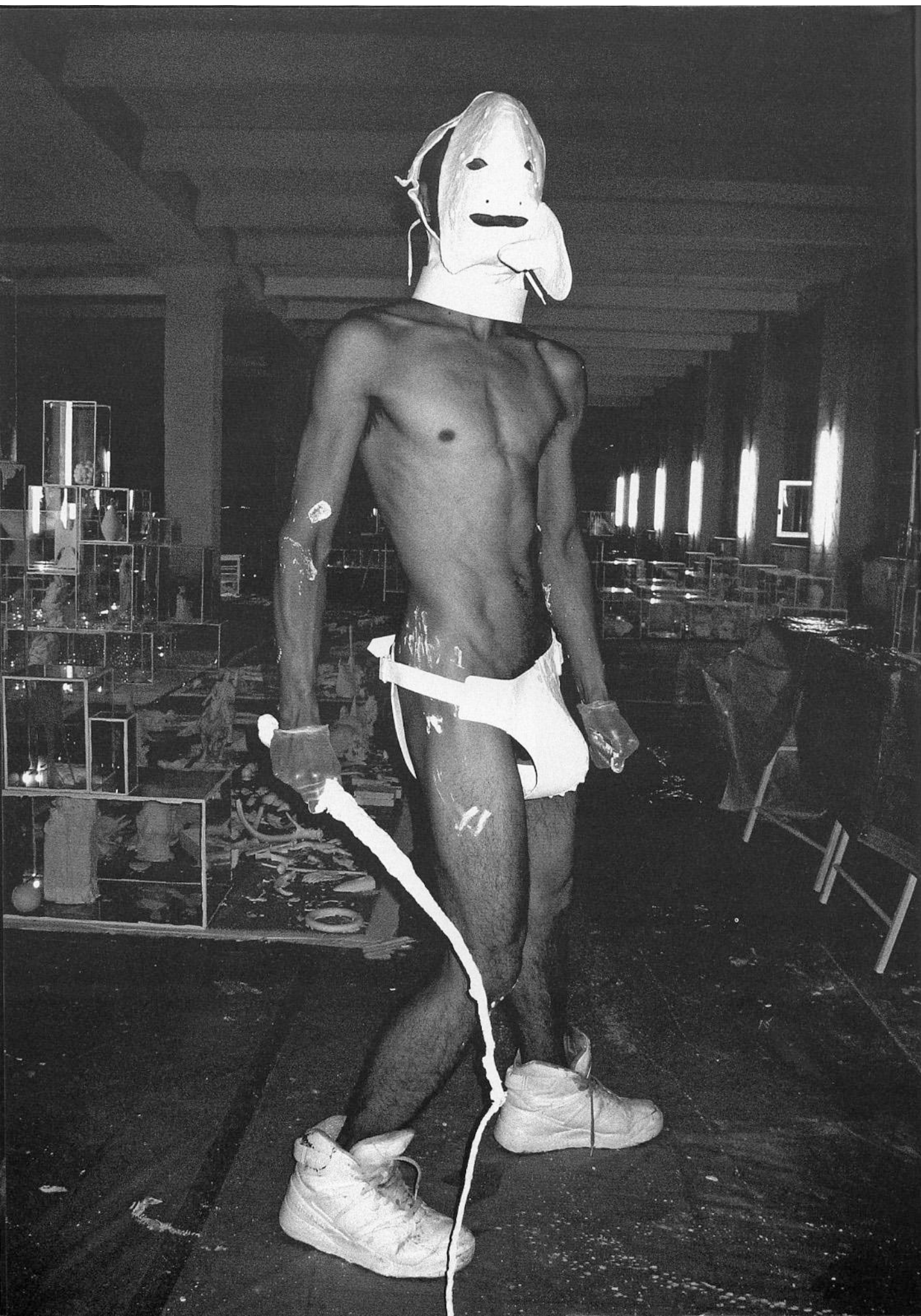
Sprungkopf, 2006.



Mein und Mein Tod, 2005.



Crackedhead, 2004.



TERENCE KOH DESTROYED his all-white studio on Schlesische Strasse before he left Berlin and now he is back in Beijing, working in gold. Or so he tells me. When I mentioned this to a friend of mine who has worked with Koh in the past, however, he was sceptical: "Yeah, right. Terence is *not* in Beijing."

This portrait features a series of photos of the artist wearing only a white-painted bondage mask and harness, and white Nike dunks, which he credits under the heading, *destroying in my studio in prague, aug 7*. Yet the abovementioned source is again on this point convinced that Koh, in addition to not being Beijing, has never had a studio in Prague – and the so-called Prague studio looks identical to what I have seen of his former space in Berlin.

The initial goal here was to determine whether or not Terence Koh deserves all the recent hype, to answer the what's-the-deal-with-Terence-Koh question. But for all the people talking about Koh, nobody seems to know the first thing about him – when Bruce Benderson wrote a piece for the catalogue of Koh's exhibition at the Vienna Secession last year, he had to conclude the following: "To this day, I still don't know who Terence Koh is, but I do know that I would like to be inside him." The fondness that A.A. Bronson, Larry Clark, and Bruces Benderson and LaBruce have shown for Koh not only in a sense validates his work, at least to some, but to a certain extent brings about the problem of how to relate to him on a level beyond the homoerotic, beyond the fetishistic. Koh has catalogued and exoticized himself – with his erratic spelling, his Asia vibe, his sexualized palate – and in so doing he eliminates our first, perhaps most obvious step to approaching his work. So the odds here are personal: Bruce Benderson is turned on, and thanks to Koh's *Big White Cock*, a rendition of the neon sign that hangs outside the Cock bar in New York and that appeared in the USA Today show at the Royal Academy in London this summer, I am left nostalgic for the New York of five years ago, before the Cock moved to where the Hole bar used to be in the East Village, before Ryan McGinley had his first show at the Whitney. As such Koh has been mythologized somehow, and while this may seem to be his performative doing, it is in fact as much our own, since all that is tangible of the real Terence are plastic souvenirs of his erotic, placeless, fictionalized existence, preserved and observed like relics behind dingy glass, as in the all white *Untitled (Vitrines 1-10)* at the Kunsthalle Zürich this fall, or the all-black *Untitled (Vitrines 5-Secret Secrets)* from the show at the Royal Academy.

"I just like to make things up," Koh said in an interview with *Butt* magazine a few years ago. I happen to believe most of what Koh has told me in our brief email exchange – he tells me he's working in gold; he tells me that he's working on his solo show, which opens in January in the Whitney's Lobby Gallery. He also tells me that he wants to recreate the *Guernica* of China, a secret project that, "will probably bee [sic] the biggest golden public toilet in the world," and no part of me doubts that he indeed wants to do this or that he is capable of making the biggest golden toilet ever. While it is hard to navigate the specifics – where he's working from (I put my money on New York), and so on – it is certain that Koh not only likes to make things up, but that in the earnestness of his fantasies he is actually good at it.

www.kohbunny.com



Terence Koh in his Berlin studio, September 2006.